



KALAMAZOO RIVER AREA OF CONCERN PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL INTERESTS AND CONCERNS

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PCBs and KALAMAZOO RIVER IMPAIRMENTS

In its Remedial Action Plan, the Public Advisory Council has identified 8 major impairments in the Kalamazoo River. Of these, five are directly affected by PCB levels in the River. Reducing PCB levels in the River (and preventing release of any more PCBs into the watershed) is a top priority.

The PAC's *Position Statement on the Clean-Up and Protection of the Kalamazoo River* includes eight recommendations, the first of which is to "Stop more PCBs from entering the river." To that end, the PAC, in collaboration with other environmental groups in the Kalamazoo Area, successfully persuaded the US Environmental Protection Agency to take action to expedite the stabilization and clean-up of the Bryant Mill Pond Site on Portage Creek, a continuing source of PCBs entering the Kalamazoo River system. The PAC looks forward to an expeditious timetable for remediation of this site. Cooperation of all parties is essential. Unnecessary bureaucratic and procedural delays must be avoided. The public must be fully informed of the process and have timely opportunities to provide advice and comment.

CAP AND CONTAIN FAR FROM AN IDEAL SOLUTION

Decision-making through the Superfund process has resulted in primarily a "cap and contain" approach to remediation of the land-based PCB-contaminated sites adjacent to the Kalamazoo River. There continues to be disagreement over the long-term viability of this methodology. Cap and contain may turn out to be seen a short-term solution to the contamination problems at these land-based sites. Unprecedented future flooding or deterioration of containment structures and materials is clearly possible. On-going monitoring is essential as an early warning system. There is little guarantee that future generations will not have to revisit this problem.

NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

As the Superfund effort moves toward establishment of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment phase, and trustees are identified, there must be significant public presence in the work and of this group. The PAC expects a full assessment to be carried out and that adequate funding for this work will be allocated. The PAC also intends to be actively involved in this process.

IN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING WE MUST ALWAYS ASK THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS BEST FOR THE ENTIRE KALAMAZOO RIVER WATERSHED?"

The PAC is committed to a "watershed approach" to addressing natural resource, environmental, and economic issues in the Kalamazoo River Watershed. Actions in one part of this watershed--an ecological system--can clearly affect the entire watershed. Land use planning, habitat protection, economic development, recreational and other uses of the River and the river corridor, remediation of contaminated sites, control of nonpoint source pollution must be considered in light of how they will affect the health and well-being of the entire watershed.

A watershed plan will be a necessity. Development and implementation of it will require the cooperation of an array of governmental units, business/industry, community groups, government agencies, and others. The PAC is looking forward to being a part of this important effort.

For more information or for anyone interested in helping further the goals of the PAC should contact PAC Facilitator, Renee Kivikko at 616-324-1600. The PAC Position Paper is available.

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